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PRIMEVAL CHINESE LEGENDS.

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In the department of Kia-siang, in Shan-tung, in North China, at the foot of Purple-cloud (Tsi-yün) mountain, there are the remains of an old ancestral temple of the After Han dynasty, A. D. 25 to 220. It belonged to the family of Wu, which was ennobled with the title Liang Heu, Marquis of Liang. There is to be seen there a pair of large sculptured pillars, 23 feet high. On three sides of them and in the temple are sculptures which were first fully brought to light in the closing years of last century. Rubbings can be procured in Peking of the sculptured scenes and figures, and a book is on sale which contains reduced cuts of the whole, with a collection of coins, seals and interesting old inscriptions existing in all parts of China. The book is called Kin-shi-so "catena of bronzes and inscriptions on stone." The exact date of the sculptures in this family chapel is A. D. 147. Among the curious objects represented are—

1. A creature with eight human heads and a tiger body, sitting on the hind legs with tail upwards. This is the "ruler of the waters," Shui-pak. Monstrous shapes for gods seem to have begun in Babylon, and the sea-demon Tiamet was frightful in appearance.

2. The ancient emperor Fuhi. His cap is square above and round below. He holds out in his right hand a carpenter's rule. His coat has broad sleeves and a girdle, and reaches to the knees. Below this, instead of legs a fish's tail is seen. The tail entwines with the tail of another figure wearing a marquis' cap, to whom Fuhi holds out the rule. In the centre holding the sleeves of the two figures is a little boy suspended above the entwined fish tails. An inscription says, "Fuhi, founder of the Chinese monarchy, teacher of divination, inventor of knotted cords for communicating thought."

Note.—The Chinese first began to represent Fuhi with the body of a dragon, fish, or spotted unicorn, about B. C. 400. This was the effect, as I suppose, of Babylonian art introduced into South China in the form of pictures, statues and the like, through the navigation of the Indian Ocean by vessels proceeding from India, the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea.

3. The upper part of one side of the stone temple is a sculptured pediment in the form of a gable representing clouds, dragons, gods and various mythic beings, without any inscription. A divine person is in the centre seated on a dais and wearing a six-cornered crown. The crown consists of six turrets rising in height from the outside to the centre. Wings proceed from the shoulders, one on each side. Below, a man and dragon support the dais, themselves suspended in the air. Above the god are clouds, a dragon and a bird-shaped creature with a human hand holding the cloud as a canopy over the god. On the god's left an attendant with winged shoulders holds out a knife. On the right another such attendant holds out a cup to the god. Five winged angels wearing caps having two horns or turrets, fill up part of the remaining space. Their legs are like tails. There are also two men with two heads each, and a three-headed bird with three

long spotted and striped feathers in his tail. Corresponding to this on the opposite end of the pediment is a two-headed bird with single tail, and behind it a toad. All these and other subordinate figures face the god. The Chinese editor of the collection cites, in illustration of this pediment, a passage from the Classic of the Hills and Seas, a book of about the third century before Christ, which describes similar mythological scenes. In that passage the chief divinity is named Si-wang-mu, Mother of the Western King or, as it may also be rendered, the Queen of the West. If this be so, then it is best to suppose that we have here a sort of Istar or Ashtoreth or Venus. The legend of the Queen of the West appears in China for the first time about the fifth century before Christ. The existence of sculpture in China at this early period is in itself an indication of the entrance of foreign art, and the Chinese historians complain of the love felt by the later Han emperors for foreign customs and objects of foreign art.

4. A sacred tree occurs in one scene. It has fifteen stalks, each terminated by a single globe, the fruit. A man with wings on his shoulders and a double turreted cap is plucking one of the stalks. This is a plant of good luck, which grew in the palace of the emperor Yan. A fruit stalk grew every day till the fifteenth of the month. From that time a stalk fell each day till the next new moon. Another account says the fruit pods began to fall on the sixth day. It is called Ming-kia. Kia is pod.

Another sacred plant is the *Polyporus lucidus* referred to farther on. Another plant seen in the sculptures consists of a single tall, strong leaf containing a central upright vein and closely set parallel veins proceeding from it to the sides. A man with wings stands on each side, and one of them strikes the plant with a knife.

The lotus also occurs in the sculptures in connection with a well, called wave well, Lang-tsing. When kings are pure and true, this well appears without being dug. A broad and beautiful lotus flower grows up from it, and the country people come wondering, to pluck the lovely buds and petals.

5. A god and goddess seated on clouds. These the Chinese critic supposes to be the Queen of the West and the Royal Ruler of the East, Tung-wang-kung. This he thinks likely, because, at the time when these scenes were sculptured, these divinities were great favorites in China. In the Shen-yi-king, "book of divine and remarkable matters," it is said that once a year the Queen of the West mounts on the wings of the "bird of rarity" and there, on a vast space where no feathers grow, meets the Royal Ruler of the East. An attendant holds a branch with three pearls upon it. This is probably the tree of the three pearls spoken of in the Classic of Mountains and Seas, and whose leaves are all pearls. The god and goddess have wings on their shoulders, as have all the attendants. The clouds round about are interspersed with carriages and horses, all having wings. In some of the carriages three horses are harnessed abreast. I suppose the god and goddess to be Marduk and Istar, or, as in the Old Testament, Merodach and Ashtoreth. The Assyrian Istar was winged, and held a bow. A halo surrounded her. In Buddhism the proper representative of Istar is the goddess of mercy, Kwan-yin, who saves men in misfortune and leads them to the western paradise. A halo surrounds her also.*

6. An interesting sculpture of the thunder-god borne through the clouds.

* See my "Chinese Buddhism."

Behind him a man blows from his mouth wind and fire. The god in his chariot holds a hammer in each hand. With these he produces thunder by beating on two drums attached to the car. Six youths draw the car. Far in front a dragon forms a bow and is sculptured with a head at each end of the bow, which is bent over a man who has been struck by lightning and lies prostrate on the ground. Over him is a man just about to strike him on the back of his neck with hammer and chisel. Attendants pour lightning out of a bottle. The wife and son of the man struck by the thunder-bolt fall on the ground overwhelmed with grief and fear. The dragon here is an instrument of punishment and, taking the form of a rain-bow, perhaps indicates that in this kind of ancient symbolism the rain-bow assisted in the discovery of the wicked.

7. God of the Great Bear. The seven stars of this constellation are in Chinese the northern peck measure. The god sits among the stars of the quadrangle. Three officers follow the car. Just before the god, four suppliants bow pleading for mercy. Above the middle star of the Bear's tail a winged angel holds a star in his hand. This star is β Bootes, the "beckoner." The suppliants stand under "the pointers." In Buddhism the Great Bear takes the form of a merciful goddess whose worship was introduced to China from India early in the Christian era.

8. The serpent appears in these sculptures in one instance wound around a cup. Two men stand facing each other with the cup between them. They are discussing some matter, and point to it. In a companion scene a serpent has twined himself round the arm of a man who has been struck and has fallen with his knees on the ground. Before him is a man with a hammer desiring to kill the serpent, and behind him another with a hatchet. The Chinese critic cites a passage from a Han dynasty poem which speaks of serpent-charmers who can swallow knives and spit fire, and another speaks of killing a serpent-demon as thick as the nave of a carriage wheel and as long as carriage poles. Chwang-chow, the philosopher, also speaks of the same demon. The poet belongs to the second century A. D., and Chwang-tsi to the third century B. C.

9. The idea of happy islands and mountains where immortality may be enjoyed, does not occur in the collection of sculptures from which the preceding particulars are drawn. I will here add a few details respecting these and the plant of immortality taken from early Chinese authors. The poet just mentioned, in his account of the city of Chang-an, says that in the imperial pleasure grounds of the emperor Han-wu-ti were to be seen divine mountains in a lake, Peng-lai in the centre and Ying-chow and Fang-chang on each side. Woods grow on the successive terraces of these fairy mountains. Hollow caves and overhanging precipices are seen below. The wind beats against the islands near, and raises waves and foaming spray which dash over the rock fungus Shi-chiün growing upon the deeply worn bank. There is seen the glossy and wonder-working plant of good luck (Ling-chi, the *Polyporus lucidus*) with its red stem. There, too, the sea-god wanders in the deep places of the lake. Beautiful was the life of the genii here represented, who sought to ascend to the paths of the upper skies, such as he who desired to mount on a dragon from the place where the brazen tripods were cast.

In explanation of these ideas of the poet it should be understood that about 400 years B. C. the fungus *Polyporus lucidus* began to be spoken of as the plant of immortality on account, we must suppose, of its rapid growth and red color. At about the same time the idea of translation to heaven on a dragon or a stork

became prevalent in China, and the ancient emperor Hwang-ti, together with two or three more early Tauists, were supposed to have ascended to heaven in this way. It should also be noted that the lake in the pleasure gardens of the Chinese emperor which contained the islands of the immortals was imitated from the stories then rife of the eastern paradise in the ocean thousands of miles distant from Asiatic shores. The philosopher Lie-tsz describes five islands in the far east; that is to say, the three named above, and two others, called Yuen-chiau and Tai-yü. The buildings on them are of gold and jade. The trees are of pearl and coral. All have a great abundance of flowers, and their fruit is all pleasant to the taste. Those who eat of the fruit never grow old or die. The inhabitants of these islands are all immortal and holy. In a day and night they fly from one island to another, and their number is beyond counting. The islands are not joined at their base. They float perpetually as they are driven by tides and waves. The immortal inhabitants, wishing their islands to be at rest, asked God to help them. God was angry and caused them to float to the western end of the world. He then commanded Gu-gom,* god of the north, to employ fifteen great sea-monsters to give stability to the islands by carrying them on their heads in turns, changing three times in all. After 60,000 years the islands became firmly fixed in their place. There was a man of enormous size in the kingdom of the leader of the dragons who set out to go to these islands, and arrived after only taking a few steps. With one hook he drew them and six of the sea monsters (crocodiles) to him, took them on his back and returned to his country. He bored through their bones to keep count of them. Then Tai-yü and Yuen-chiau floated to the North Pole, and sank into the sea. Multitudes of the immortals were scattered in different directions homeless. God was extremely angry and punished the people of the kingdom of the dragon leaders by making them gradually shorter in stature, till, in the time of the emperors Fu-hi and Shen-nung, they were not more than a few tens of feet in height.

This story reads like a Hindoo fable. The dragons seem to be the Nagas of the Buddhist books of India. Their gigantic size is Hindoo; but I thought it best to add this feature, because I wished to show in how many particulars a certain parallel may be drawn between Tauist ancient stories and the first chapters of Genesis. The philosopher Lie-tsz lived about B. C. 450. No stories of this kind occur in the old books of China before that time. They came to China by way of India probably.

10. Lucky days. The Sabbath, in the Babylonian view, was a day for religious observances, the keeping of which led to prosperity. Babylonian usages and beliefs were diffused eastward, and hence the Hindoos first and the Chinese afterwards had their lucky days, and periods of worship continued for seven days. The week of seven days ruled over by the sun, moon and five planets, does not appear in Chinese books till after the Christian era, but in their oldest records the Chinese had lucky days. These were discovered by divination, and for sacrifices it was especially needful to select a lucky day whenever the day was not fixed by the calendar. With the Chinese as with the Babylonians the idea intended is not best expressed by our word *luck*. Lucky days were such as would bring prosperity, and it was proper to offer sacrifices on these occasions, and generally keep them religiously. But they were also selected by divination for commencing

* Can this be the Kingu of the Babylonians?

house-building or warlike expeditions, for marriages or funerals, etc. The diviner's active manipulation with milfoil stalks or the shell of the tortoise, made the suppliant acquainted, it was believed, with the sacred will of superior beings. Hence there was no frivolous idea connected with the term lucky day. In the celebrated diviner's manual the *Yi-king*, composed chiefly during the period reaching from the fourteenth century before Christ to the sixth century, a returning seventh day is mentioned; but it is connected with worship at the winter solstice. It is added that public business was intermitted by the ancient kings, and merchants rested on their journeys, gates of cities being closed. This would occur at the solstice with a religious purpose on the part of the government, in connection, apparently, with some sort of attention to a seven-days' interval, the nature of which is not clearly stated. The Sabbath then appears in old Chinese literature in its broader Old Testament sense as embracing all days set apart to rest and worship, and conducted with the expectation of a blessing to follow on its suitable observance. In regard to the order of the days of the week, it should be observed that the succession of the planets is not in all cases the same. The astrologers placed Mercury in the north (water), Mars in the south (fire), Jupiter in the east (wood), Venus in the west (metal), the center (earth) being left for Saturn. The order is said to be determined by astrology. The planets rule the twenty-four hours of the day in the following order: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon. If we begin with Saturn, the twenty-fifth hour will be the first of the second day, and will fall to the Sun. The third day will fall to the Moon, the fourth to Mars, the fifth to Mercury, the sixth to Jupiter and the seventh to Venus. This is the order in the Teutonic week. The Chinese order of the week, as introduced after the Christian era, is Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Wood, Metal, Earth, which is the same as the western week. But the Chinese, long before they had the week in this order, had the doctrine of the five elements, and in the *Hung-fan*,* a document of the twelfth century B. C., the order of the five elements is, distinctly and beyond all doubt, water, fire, wood, metal, earth. Mercury is not mentioned in Chinese books as a planet before the ninth century. The five elements then must be regarded as not necessarily founded on the knowledge of the five planets. If we ask, To what are they to be referred in nature? we must reply, To the seasons. The Chinese word for element is *king*, "to walk," "to act." The elements are all moving powers. Therefore, the order must be wood (spring), fire (summer), metal (autumn), water (winter), earth. But neither does this agree with what we find in the *Hung-fan*; which we must, therefore, leave unexplained.

11. Waters of life. The waters of life in Hades, to find which the goddess Istar visited the unseen world, can only be paralleled in Chinese by the phrase *hwang-ts'in-en*, yellow springs. Underground springs are so named as early as the *Tso-chwen*, a copious history of the fifth century B. C. It mentions the phrase "yellow fountain" in the year B. C. 721: "Except beneath the yellow fountain, mother and son will not again meet." By this, Hades is intended, but not with the fullness of detail found in the Buddhist books after the Christian era. The history goes on to say that Chwang-kung, duke of the Cheng kingdom, who had used these words in reference to his mother, still living, caused a tunnel to be made underground, and there his mother came to meet him, and his word was ful-

* This is described in my "China's Place in Philology."

filled. The Chinese at that time began to talk of a subterranean abode of the dead something in the manner of the references to Hades in the Old Testament. Afterwards, when Buddhism arrived, accounts of Hades became very minute. The descent of Istar to the subterranean world may be paralleled by Buddhist stories of persons passing through the city of the dead and returning to life to give an account of what they saw and heard. These stories are modern, and they often take the form of a dream or reverie. In ancient times, before Confucius, there was a belief in the continued existence of the soul, and this was inseparable from the worship of ancestors, but it was not accompanied by definite statement. There is one remarkable passage in the Book of Odes, B. C. 1100, which speaks of the great chieftain Wen-wang, after his death as moving up and down in the presence of God. The remarkable paucity of detailed statement regarding the future life which we observe in the Old Testament finds more than a parallel in old Chinese literature, till Buddhism brought in the Hindoo paradise and world of future punishments in their many forms.

12. Mountain of the gods. This mountain is Kwan-lun, and refers to one of the lofty mountain ranges in Central Asia. The range was known by this name before the legend of its being the abode of gods became attached to it. As the Akkadians went probably from Central Asia to Elam, where the archæologists now place them, before their occupation of the Babylonian plain, we may identify their Kharsak-kurra with the mountain ranges in Central Asia, because they speak of this mountain, round which the starry heavens turn, as being in the east. If President Warren's view presented in "Paradise Found" be correct, the position of the mountain of the east will at a still earlier time in the history of the Akkadian migrations require to be transferred to the Arctic circle. But that is quite beyond the age of the traditions, Akkadian and Chinese, of which I am speaking. The location of Kwan-lun in Chinese tradition is in Sü,* which represents a space on the north-western horizon of thirty degrees, counting 45° to 75°, from the North Pole. The Chinese legends of the goddess Si-wang-mu and the yellow emperor Hwang-ti as residing on this mountain in splendid palaces and divine pomp, do not go farther back than the fifth century before Christ, and when they first occur it is in Tauist authors, who mix romance with philosophy. At that early time the Hindoo Sumera of the Buddhists was perhaps only beginning to assume a consolidated shape, partly because of the remarkable delay of the Hindoos to adopt the art of writing. Hence the Chinese mountain of the gods is in its appearance more Akkadian than Hindoo. In the Chinese tradition there are around the mountain rivers of five colors. The Red was the most noteworthy. The Yellow River was one of the five. The Oxus and Jaxartes, as suggested by the late Rev. J. S. McIlvaine, would be two others. A Black River on the north is mentioned. This may have been the Jaxartes. Traditions change to suit the altered position of races. A nation clings to old memories while emigrating to new scenes. So the Euphrates and Tigris took the place of these earlier rivers.

In conclusion, I observe that the translation of Elijah, placed in our Bibles in the year B. C. 921, is about four centuries earlier than the first instances of Tauist statements of the Yellow Emperor and other heroes of that religion ascending to heaven on the backs of dragons and storks. The Tauists may have received the notion from the west, from Jewish visitors.

* Some say, Sü and Hai. This would be 15° to 75° in the north-west.